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Merging paradigms: translating pharaonic ideology in Theocritus' Idyll 17*

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1. The Egyptian connection

The last thirty years have seen an upsurge of interest among classicists in teasing out Egyptian influences in the poetry of the Hellenistic scholar-poets Callimachus, Theocritus and Apollonius of Rhodes, who all wrote their learned poetry in the Museum of Alexandria and its famous library in the first half of the 3rd cent. BC under the patronage of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.¹ This interest ties in with the broader study of acculturation in Ptolemaic Egypt and the way the (early) Ptolemies dealt with their “monarchie bicéphale”.² Although the extent to which the first three Ptolemies were engaged with the Egyptian side of their kingship is a matter of debate, the excavations in the harbour of Alexandria under the direction of J.-Y. Empereur have revealed the Ptolemaic palace as adorned with Egyptian art and monuments, thus making it more and more clear that Philadelphus was very interested in his Egyptian as well as his Greek royal status.³ As plate 1 illustrates, however, previous material already provided evidence of this.⁴ Nevertheless, the influence

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1 Wassermann 1925 already had a brief note on Call. *H. Zeus*, but serious interest in the Egyptian dimension of Hellenistic poetry came later with Merkelbach 1981 (on Theocr. *Id.* 17; Call. *H. Apollo*, *H. Delos*); Koenen 1977, 79-86 (on Theocr. *Id.* 24), 1983 (on Theocr. *Id.* 17; Call. *H. Delos*), 1993 (on Call. *H. Delos*, *Ep.* 28 Pf., *Lock of Berenice*); Bing 1988 (on Call. *H. Delos*); Selden 1998 (mainly on Call. *H. Apollo*; *Lock of Berenice*); Hunter 2003, 23-4; 46-53 (on *Id.* 17, mainly lines 86-92); Stephens 2002 (on Call.); 2003 (on Call., Theocr. and Ap. Rh.); Noegel 2004 (on Ap. Rh.).

2 Peremans 1987. See also e.g. Koenen 1993 for this topic, with p. 25, n. 2 for more bibliography.

3 See e.g. Empereur 1998; Hunter 2003, 46-7.

4 See also Stanwick 2002 and Stephens 2003, 12-6. The latter warns against excessive caution concerning the “Egyptianization” of the first Ptolemies (p. 16): “Scholarly consensus holds that in the latter part of his reign, Soter, followed by Philadelphus and Euergetes, retreated from a position that tended to engage with or include elements of both Egyptian and Greek cultures to one of isolationism and of relative cultural purity for Greeks. It is wise to be cautious here (...). [E]ven if the early Ptolemies did retreat from attempts at cultural integration, their rule

of Egyptian ideology upon Hellenistic poetry has been treated with scepticism,⁵ and admittedly there are some problems. For instance, most of the evidence for Ptolemaic interest in Egyptian culture postdates Philadelphus' reign, and to use this material to study the situation under Philadelphus could be dangerously anachronistic. Moreover, Egyptian ideas have been found mostly in poetic contexts which are perfectly understandable as Greek, and an Egyptian interpretation is thus often considered superfluous.⁶ Although one could rightly react with Stephens that without Homer Vergil's *Aeneid* would still be intelligible,⁷ there is a methodological problem which has to do with the question of the audience of Hellenistic poetry:⁸ obviously the intended audience was at least Greek-speaking, but to what extent could it recognize (subtle) allusions to Egyptian mythology? Mainly poetry which has very traditional Greek features, such as Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos*, has been subjected to Egyptian interpretations. As the Egyptian dimension – if at all present – must be very implicit, the following remark of Weber is at first sight quite understandable: "Die Ermahnung von Bulloch, 'modern interpreters of Callimachus and Theocritus pay far too little attention to the possible influence of Egyptian ways of thinking in Hellenistic poetry', ist deshalb kaum gerechtfertigt, will man nicht jeder Erwähnung einer griechischen Gottheit oder einer mythologischen Episode zweifellos oftmals vorhandene ägyptische Äquivalente unterlegen."⁹ Weber generalizes here, though, and he entirely neglects the possibility that a specific context may very well evoke Egyptian ideas. At this point, I would like to turn to *Idyll* 17 of Theocritus, a poem which is also known as the *Encomium of Ptolemy II Philadelphus*.¹⁰ It is quite different from other Hellenistic poems in that it *explicitly* has as its subject Philadelphus. His dual status as Greek-Macedonian *basileus* and Egyptian pharaoh is a fact and is obviously thematically in place in the context of a poem of praise. I think that many of the problems involved in reading Egyptian influences into Hellenistic poetry can be avoided in dealing with this poem. I even propose inverting the "Egyptian influence" hypothesis: if *Idyll* 17 shows systematic treatment of Egyptian, pharaonic ideology in Greek terms, it indicates that at least one Hellenistic poet in one of his poems was

continued to be dual (...). And even if the necessary pharaonic practices were performed by royal surrogates at the periphery of an Alexandrian Greek's consciousness, the dynamic interplay of the two competing styles of kingship could not have been ignored, especially in the light of the fact that over time the Egyptianization of the Ptolemies certainly continued. Brother-sister marriage, after all, appears as early as Philadelphus, and these early monarchs carried on major building programs of Egyptian monuments, many of which were erected in Alexandria itself (...)."

5 Zanker 1989, 91-9 (mainly dealing with Theocritus) and Weber 1993, 371-88. See Stephens 2002, 237-8 and Hunter 2003, 47-9 for further discussion.

6 On this point see especially Weber 1993, 381ff.

7 Stephens 2002, 238.

8 See also n. 55.

9 Weber 1993, 386-7, reacting to Bulloch 1984, 213, n. 10.

10 For the status of this title see Gow 1950, I, lxix-lxxii and Hunter 2003, 9, who thinks that the title εἰς Πτολεμαῖον "has some claim to authenticity".

aware of the Egyptian status of his ruler and tried to express this in Greek terms. The strategies used in *Idyll* 17 can then be deployed to strengthen the more implicit presence of Egyptian ideas in other Hellenistic poems.

The (possible) Egyptian dimension of Theocritus' encomium has recently been studied by Stephens and Hunter.¹¹ In her book *Seeing double*, Stephens has already shown how certain pharaonic elements are "translated" into Greek in *Idyll* 17, but her treatment of the poem, which is part of a large-scale project involving a large part of Theocritus' oeuvre, Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus* and *Hymn to Delos* and Apollonius' epic *Argonautica*, is far from systematic. Hunter's commentary on *Idyll* 17 does focus in detail on the poem, but does not seem to take Stephens' work fully into account (it was published in the same year). On his method Hunter states: "Throughout the commentary I have deemed it better, where appropriate, to adduce Egyptian 'parallels', even if their significance for the interpretation of [*Idyll* 17] is doubtful, as others may judge differently from me, and this is, above all, a matter of critical judgment."¹² I think that Hunter's approach is much too cautious in the specific case of *Idyll* 17. Moreover, his treatment of *Idyll* 17 is similar to that of Callimachus, fr. 228 Pf. and Theocritus, *Idyll* 15.106-8, on which he comments: "Neither instance relies upon the niceties of pharaonic ideology or sacred narratives (...); the Egyptian color is painted with the very broadest brush and in ways that it is hardly unreasonable to think could have been appreciated by many cultured Greeks."¹³ As I will try to show, however, *Idyll* 17 is quite different from these poems in that the Egyptian dimension is essential for understanding the poem. I will argue that Philadelphus' Egyptian status is consistently "translated" into Greek in *Idyll* 17 through the association of the king with divinity. In order to be able to offer such a reading, the genre of the poem has to be dealt with first, as this is the gateway to its Egyptian dimension.

2. Encomium and hymn: Philadelphus the mortal god

The commentator Gow characterized *Idyll* 17 in 1950 as "stiff, conventional, and sycophantic".¹⁴ The epithet "sycophantic" is quite culturally conditioned, as praise poetry was not in low esteem at all in antiquity.¹⁵ "Conventional" is more understandable, as Theocritus, the alleged creator of the bucolic genre, here seems to have written a more traditional poem, which has as its models traditional *Homeric Hymns* to the gods. Furthermore, the poem clearly has the format of a rhetorical prose

11 Stephens 2003, 147-70; Hunter 2003, 23-4; 46-53 (on *Id.* 17, mainly lines 86-92); see also n. 1 for work on Egyptian influences in *Id.* 17.

12 Hunter 2003, 53, n. 130.

13 Hunter 2003, 52-3.

14 Gow 1950, II, 325.

15 This point is made by e.g. Burgess 1902, 113ff.; Meincke 1965, 145; Cairns 1972, 104.

encomium.¹⁶ Traditionally, Isocrates is regarded as the inventor of this genre with his encomium of the Greek king Eugaroras (c. 370 BC).¹⁷ In this encomium, Isocrates himself claims to be innovative in that he praises the virtues of a (historical) man *in prose*.¹⁸ He was also innovative concerning the τόποι (“topics”) to be treated. He more or less fixed these for the genre, as well as the order in which to treat them.¹⁹ In Theocritus’ time, the prose encomium was an established genre, which “had received considerable treatment in the rhetorical theorists and was a well-mined staple of rhetorical education”.²⁰ Thus, *Idyll 17* is anything but conventional, as no similar hybrid poem – combining the genres of the prose encomium and the *Homeric hymn* – has come down to us from the Hellenistic age.²¹ I will now point out some features of the prose encomium and *Homeric hymn*. Along the way, I will highlight two important motifs in the poem, which will be dealt with later: 1) the association of Philadelphus with Zeus and 2) his relationship with the so-called heroes or demigods.

Initially, Philadelphus is mainly associated with the supreme Greek god Zeus. We even seem to be dealing with a hymn to this god, as the poem opens with an address to him:

ἐκ Διὸς ἀρχώμεθα καὶ ἐς Δία λήγεται Μοῖσαι,
ἀθανάτων τὸν ἄριστον, ἐπὴν ἴ ἀείδωμεν ἀοιδαῖς. Theocr. *Id.* 17.1-2

From Zeus let us begin, Muses, cease with Zeus, best of the immortal ones,
whenever we raise our voices in song. (tr. Hunter 2003)

16 Meincke 1965, 85-164 treats the similarities between *Id.* 17 and the genres mentioned in detail. See also Fraustadt 1909, 91f. and the recent treatment of the generic aspects of the poem by Hunter 2003, 8-24. Cairns 1972, 104-12 is also very useful, although he analyses the similarities with and departures from the βασιλικὸς λόγος (“encomium for a king”), as described by the rhetorician Menander (3rd / 4th cent. BC; Sp. III 331-446), which is “dangerously circular” (see Hunter 2003, 21-2).

17 Thus e.g. Burgess 1902, 115f.; Fraustadt 1909, 60. See Hunter 2003, 13-4 for treatment of the scholarly debate about this claim.

18 *Euag.* 8: οἶδα μὲν οἷν ὅτι χαλεπὸν ἐστὶν ὃ μέλλω ποιεῖν, ἀνδρὸς ἀρετὴν διὰ λόγων ἐγκωμιάζειν. σημεῖον δὲ μέγιστον· περὶ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλων πολλῶν καὶ παντοδαπῶν λέγειν τολμῶσιν οἱ περὶ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ὄντες, περὶ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων οὐδεὶς πώποτ’ αὐτῶν συγγράφειν ἐπεχείρησεν. “I am fully aware that what I propose to do is difficult – to eulogize in prose the virtues of a man. The best proof is this: Those who devote themselves to philosophy [i.e. oratory and rhetoric] venture to speak on many subjects of every kind, but no one of them has ever attempted to compose a discourse on such a theme.” Translation adapted from Van Hook 1945.

19 See e.g. Burgess 1902, 120ff. and Pernot 1993, I, 134ff. for a systematic overview of these topoi and how they should be treated according to the rhetorical handbooks.

20 Stephens 2003, 147.

21 Cf. Hunter 2003, 8-9: “[*Id.* 17] is, in fact, in many ways an isolated example of what survives of Hellenistic poetry, though there is good reason to believe that it was not so isolated in antiquity.”

In lines 3-4, however, Philadelphus is described as “the greatest of men” and in the next line he is associated with the race of heroes, according to Hesiod also known as ἡμίθεοι, “demigods”, who lived on earth before our own, iron race:²²

ἀνδρῶν δ' αὖ Πτολεμαῖος ἐνὶ πρώτοισι λεγέσθω
καὶ πύματος καὶ μέσσοις· ὃ γὰρ προφερέστατος ἀνδρῶν.
ἥρωες, τοὶ πρόσθεν ἀφ' ἡμιθέων ἐγένοντο,
ῥέξαντες καλὰ ἔργα σοφῶν ἐκύρησαν αἰοιδῶν·
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ Πτολεμαῖον ἐπιστάμενος καλὰ εἰπεῖν
ὑμνήσαιμι· ὕμνοι δὲ καὶ ἀθανάτων γέρας αὐτῶν Theocr. *Id.* 17.3-8

But of men let Ptolemy be named in the first place, at the end, and in the middle, for he is the greatest of men. The heroes, who in former times were descended from demigods, performed marvellous deeds and found skilled poets to honor them. I, however, who understand the art of praise, would hymn Ptolemy: hymns are the reward even of the immortals themselves. (tr. Hunter 2003)

In line 8 it is emphatically stated that we are dealing with a hymn,²³ but in the next line a typical feature of the προοίμιον (“proem”) of the rhetorical prose encomium is introduced: the indication of the difficulty of the task at hand:²⁴

Ἴδαν ἐς πολύδενδρον ἀνὴρ ὑλατόμος ἐλθὼν
παπταίνει, παρεόντος ἄδην, πόθεν ἄρξεται ἔργου·
τί πρῶτον καταλέξω ἐπεὶ πάρα μυρία εἰπεῖν
οἷσι θεοὶ τὸν ἄριστον ἐτίμησαν βασιλῆων Theocr. *Id.* 17.9-12

When he goes to richly forested Ida, the woodcutter gazes around to see where he should start his task in the midst of such plenty; what shall I first set down, for countless to record are the honors that the gods have bestowed upon the best of kings? (tr. Hunter 2003)

Lines 13 to 57 deal with the parents of Philadelphus and are thus analogous to constitute the second part of the rhetorical prose encomium, which deals with the γένος (“family”).²⁵ The transition from προοίμιον to γένος is clearly marked by the emphatic ἐκ πατέρων (“from his fathers / ancestors”). First, Philadelphus’ father, Ptolemy Soter, is treated in lines 13 to 33. He is involved in a kind of symposium at Zeus’ home on Mount Olympus, together with his predecessor as pharaoh of Egypt, Alexander the Great, and their alleged common ancestor, Heracles, of course the son

22 See p. 400 below, where the passage from Hesiod is quoted.

23 Cf. Hunter 2003, 8: “[*Id.* 17] announces itself emphatically as a ὕμνος.”

24 See e.g. Burgess 1902, 122, who quotes Doxopater (11th cent. AD rhetorician; Walz II, 449.33): νόμος ἐστὶ τοῖς ἐγκωμιάζουσι, μείζονα τοῦ οἰκείου λόγου ἀεὶ ὁμολογεῖν τὴν προκειμένην ὑπόθεσιν. “It is the law of encomium to agree always that the subject is greater than words can match.”

25 For this part of the encomium (of a man) see e.g. Burgess 1902, 122 and Pernot 1993, I, 154-6.

of Zeus. Again Philadelphus is associated with Zeus, now as his descendant. The scene is hymnic as well, as it “owes much to the opening of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*”.²⁶

Philadelphus’ mother Berenice is treated next, in lines 34-58. She is mainly associated with Aphrodite, who “pressed her delicate hands upon Berenice’s breast”,²⁷ made her immortal after her death and let the queen share in her honour as “co-temple goddess”.²⁸ Then, in lines 53 to 57, Philadelphus is compared to the Homeric heroes Achilles and Diomedes:

Ἄργεΐα κυάνοφρυ, σὺ λαοφόνον Διομήδεα
μισγομένα Τυδίη τέκες Καλυδωνίῳ ἀνδρί,
ἀλλὰ Θέτις βαθύκολπος ἀκονιστὰν Ἀχιλλῆα
Αἰακίδα Πηλῆι· σὲ δ’ αἰχμητὰ Πτολεμαίε,
αἰχμητῶ Πτολεμαίῳ ἀρίζηλος Βερενίκα. Theocr. *Id.* 17.53-7

Dark-browed lady of Argos, you lay with Tydeus, a man of Calydon, and bore bloodthirsty Diomedes; deep-bosomed Thetis bore spearman Achilles to Peleus, son of Aeacus; but you, warrior Ptolemy, are the child of the warrior Ptolemy and glorious Berenice. (tr. Hunter 2003)

The application of the epithet αἰχμητής (“spearman”) to both Ptolemies in lines 56-57 emphasizes that Philadelphus is not inferior to his father. The comparison with Achilles and Diomedes and their fathers may even suggest that Philadelphus outdoes Soter, as both Homeric heroes surpassed their fathers as well.²⁹ Most importantly, however, the application of the (military) qualities of the father to the son legitimizes Philadelphus’ position as king and successor to Soter.

Lines 58 to 76 deal with Philadelphus’ birth on the island of Kos and are analogous to the next part of the rhetorical prose encomium, in which the γένεσις (“birth”) of the *laudandus* is treated. An important feature of this part of the encomium is the mention of special events during or before the birth.³⁰ This is realized by the triple cry of an eagle, the bird of Zeus, as a sign of approval of Philadelphus as the future king, which Theocritus mentions after the island of Kos has addressed the newborn child in lines 66-70:³¹

26 Stephens 2003, 152.

27 *Id.* 17.37: κόλπον ἔς εὐώδη ῥαδινὰς ἐσεμάξατο χεῖρας.

28 See Hunter 2003, 136 (on *Id.* 17.50: ἔς ναὸν κατέθηκας, ἑᾶς δ’ ἀπεδάσσαο τιμᾶς. “[You, (i.e. Aphrodite)] set her in your temple, and gave her a share in your own honor.” [Translation by Hunter 2003.]): “This verse itself suggests that Berenice became a σύνναος θεός with Aphrodite, that is, an image of her was placed in Aphrodite’s temple.” Cf. also *Id.* 15.106-8.

29 Cf. Stephens 2003, 157. *Contra* Hunter 2003, 138 (on *Id.* 17.53-60). See also p. 401 below on the divine status of the persons mentioned.

30 See e.g. Burgess 1902, 122; Pernot 1993, vol. 1, 156-7.

31 The underlinings and bold markings, highlighting allusions to Hesiod’s *Theogony* and Callimachus’ *Hymn to Zeus*, will be discussed on p. 399 below.

ὥς ἄρα νᾶσος ἔειπεν· ὁ δ' ὑψόθεν ἔκλαγε φωνᾷ
 ἔς τρις ἀπὸ νεφέων μέγας αἰετός, αἴσιος ὄρνις.
 Ζηνός που τόδε σᾶμα· Διὶ Κρονίωνι μέλονται
 αἰδοῖοι βασιλῆες, ὁ δ' ἔξοχος ὃν κε φιλήσῃ
 γεινόμενον τὰ πρῶτα· πολὺς δέ οἱ ὄλβος ὁπαδεῖ,
 πολλὰς δὲ κρατέει γαίας, πολλὰς δὲ θαλάσσας. Theocr. *Id.* 17.71-76

Thus did the island [i.e. Kos] speak, and from the clouds above a huge eagle, a bird of omen, screamed three times. This, no doubt, was Zeus's sign. To Zeus, the son of Kronos, are reverend kings dear, but he whom Zeus loves from the very moment of his birth is pre-eminent; vast is the prosperity that attends him, vast the land over which he rules, and vast the sea. (tr. Hunter 2003)

The whole γένεσις-section (58-76) is very hymnic as well because of the clear allusions to the description of Apollo's birth on Delos in the *Homeric Hymn* to Apollo (49ff.), where the island (like Kos in *Idyll* 17) also addresses the baby, and also because of the similarities with Callimachus' "Homeric" *Hymn to Delos*.³²

After this section, the encomium-like structure of the poem is looser. The traditional section on παιδεία / ἀνατροφή ("education"), in which the circumstances of the youth are normally described,³³ has no parallel in the poem, and treatment of the πράξεις ("deeds") of the *laudandus*, the most important section of the rhetorical prose encomium, is somewhat different in this *Idyll*.³⁴ The deeds are often divided in πράξεις κατὰ πόλεμον ("in wartime") and κατ' εἰρήνην ("in peacetime").³⁵ Theocritus, however, rather seems to treat the results of Philadelphus' deeds.³⁶ Lines

32 See Meincke 1965 for parallels with *H. Hom. Ap.* (pp. 111-6) and Call. *H. Delos* (pp. 116-24), which probably postdates *Id.* 17 (see e.g. Bing 1988, 91-3 for the date of the poem). See Hunter 2003, 151 (on *Id.* 17.71-2) for the hymnic aspect of the cry of Theocritus' eagle (which, as we have just seen, can also be regarded as an encomiastic feature): "[T]he appearance of Zeus' eagle is paralleled by the musical swans that herald Apollo's birth in Callim. *H.* 4.249-54."

33 On this topic see e.g. Burgess 1902, 122 and Pernot 1993, I, 161-3.

34 The ἐπιτηδεύματα ("accomplishments") are also not dealt with, but treatment of these is often combined with that of the πράξεις ("deeds"); Burgess 1902, 123: "The ἐπιτηδεύματα determine the πράξεις and are also seen in them." See also Pernot 1993, I, 163-5 on this topic, and see Menander for a definition: ἐπιτηδεύματα δ' ἐστὶν ἄνευ ἀγωνιστικῶν (Sp. III 384. 20-1).

πράξεων ἥθη. "Accomplishments are an indication of the character and policy of the population, independently of competitive action." Translation by Russell / Wilson 1981.) Cf. 372.4: ἐπιτηδεύματα δ' ἐστὶν ἄνευ ἀγωνιστικῶν πράξεων ἥθη. "Accomplishments" are qualities of character not involved with real competitive actions." The σύγκρισις ("comparison"), a very important encomiastic topic (for which see Burgess 1902, 125-6), does not appear as a separate section, but in lines 55-7 Philadelphus is compared to Diomedes, Achilles and his father Soter.

35 See e.g. Burgess 1902, 123-4 on this "chief topic", and its division. See also Pernot 1993, I, 165-73.

36 Cairns 1972, 108.

77-94, with the praise of Egypt and the summing up of Philadelphus' territorial acquisitions and military power, seem an alternative for the deeds in wartime. Again, Philadelphus is linked to Zeus:

μυρία ἄπειροί τε καὶ ἔθνεα μυρία φωτῶν
 λήιον ἀλδήσκουσιν ὀφελλόμενον Διὸς ὄμβρῳ
 ἀλλ' οὔτις τόσα φύει ὅσα χθαμαλὰ Αἴγυπτος,
 Νεῖλος ἀναβλύζων διεράν ὅτε βώλακα θρύπτει Theocr. *Id.* 17.77-80

Countless lands and countless races of men raise their crops with the aid of Zeus' rain, but no land is as productive as low-lying Egypt, when the flooding Nile drenches and breaks up the soil. (tr. Hunter 2003)

Zeus gives rain to other countries, whereas the Nile makes Egypt fertile. By implication, Zeus seems indirectly responsible for Egypt's fertility as well, but Williams has suggested an etymological play on διερός ("wet") and Ζεύς in this passage,³⁷ which would underline Zeus' involvement. The reason for Zeus' special care for Egypt in comparison with other countries should be sought in the immediately preceding passage (lines 71-6, quoted above), where Philadelphus is said to hold the place of honour among the kings dear to Zeus.

The next section, from line 95 to 105, seems an alternative for the deeds in peacetime. It praises Philadelphus' ὄλβος ("wealth") and the internal peace and prosperity of Egypt, which are the result of Philadelphus' military prowess, as stated in lines 102 to 105. Again his position as king and successor of Soter (which he once more seems to surpass) is legitimized:

τοῖος ἀνὴρ πλατέεσσιν ἐνύδρυσται πεδίοισι
 ξανθοκόμας Πτολεμαῖος, ἐπιστάμενος δόρυ πάλλειν,
 ᾧ ἐπίπαγχν μέλει πατρώια πάντα φυλάσσειν
 οἷ' ἀγαθῷ βασιλῇ, τὰ δὲ κτεατίζεται αὐτός. Theocr. *Id.* 17.102-5

So great a man is settled in the broad fields, fair-haired Ptolemy, skilled with the spear, whose principal concern, as is right for a good king, is to preserve his inheritance from his father, and he increases the store himself. (tr. Hunter 2003)

Contrary to the previous section, Zeus is at first sight not even indirectly present in this one, which suggests that Egypt's peace and prosperity are indeed Philadelphus' merit. Considering the special bond between Zeus and this king, however, as described in lines 71-6, one is still tempted to relate Philadelphus' success to Zeus' favour. Moreover, the description of Philadelphus' ὄλβος is a confirmation of this special relationship, as lines 74-75 state that "he whom Zeus loves from the very moment of birth is pre-eminent; vast is the prosperity (ὄλβος) that attends him". This is underlined by an allusion to another important intertext for *Idyll* 17, Callimachus'

37 Williams 1981, 87-8.

Hymn to Zeus,³⁸ where it is said that Zeus “poured riches upon [kings] and prosperity (ἄλβον) enough. On all, but not the same amounts. We can infer as much from our lord’s [i.e. Philadelphus’] case, for he outstrips them all by far”.³⁹

Next, in lines 106-134, some virtues of the king are treated. This is of course an essential part of the rhetorical prose encomium. It is often integrated into the πράξεις-section, but it can also constitute a separate section after the πράξεις,⁴⁰ as here. In lines 106 to 109 Philadelphus’ εὐεργεσία (“well-doing”) is praised, in lines 110 to 111 his φιλανθρωπία (“benevolence”), in lines 112 to 120 his φιλομουσία (“love of the Muses”), and in lines 121-134 his εὐσεβεία (“reverence towards the gods or parents”).⁴¹ Seen from the perspective of an encomium, this series of virtues is quite striking, as only φιλανθρωπία is standard as a virtue treated in a rhetorical prose encomium.⁴² The virtue last mentioned, Philadelphus’ εὐσεβεία, is treated most extensively. It is illustrated by the way Philadelphus and his sister-wife Arsinoë II honour their parents, who were deified by Philadelphus as the Θεοὶ Σωτῆρες (“Saviour Gods”) in 282 BC, roughly ten years before *Idyll* 17 was written, as is described in lines 121-5.⁴³ Theocritus then continues:

πολλὰ δὲ πιαυθέντα βοῶν ὄγε μηρία καίει
 μησὶ περιπλομένοισιν ἐρευθομένων ἐπὶ βωμῶν,
 αὐτός τ’ ἰφθίμα τ’ ἄλοχος, τὰς οὔτις ἀρείων
 νυμφίον ἐν μεγάροισι γυνὰ περιβάλλετ’ ἀγοστῶ,
 ἐκ θυμοῦ στέργοισα κασίγνητόν τε πόσιν τε. Theocr. *Id.* 17.126-30

Many are the fattened thighs of cattle that he burns upon the bloodied altars as the passage of months proceeds, both he and his noble partner, than whom no better wife embraces her young husband in the halls, loving with all her heart her brother and her husband. (tr. Hunter 2003)

38 It is *communis opinio* that Callimachus’ poem antedates *Id.* 17; see Clauss 1986 for the date of the *Hymn to Zeus*. See Meincke 1965, 183-208 and Stephens 2003, 148ff. for the contact between the two texts.

39 ἐν δὲ ῥητφενίην ἔβαλές σφισιν, ἐν δ’ ἄλις ἄλβον·| πᾶσιμὲν, οὐ μάλα δ’ ἴσον. ἔοικε δὲ τεκμήρασθαι | ἡμετέρῳ μεδέοντι· περιπρὸ γὰρ εὐρὺ βέβηκεν. (Call. *H. Zeus* 84-6, Translation by Nisetich 2001.) See also p. 399 below for the allusion in *Id.* 17.73-4 to Call. *H. Zeus* 78.

40 As in Xenophon’s *Agésilas* (c. 360 BC), together with Isocrates’ *Euagoras* the most important archetypal rhetorical prose encomium (see e.g. Fraustadt 1909, 67-70 for this encomium). Cf. Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 3.7.15): *namque alias aetatis gradus gestarumque rerum ordinem sequi speciosius fuit (...), alias in species virtutum dividere laudem*. “In some cases, the more attractive course has proved to be to follow the successive stages of a man’s life and the order of his actions. (...), in other cases, it has seemed better to split up the encomium into the various virtues.” (Translation by Russell 2002.)

41 LSJ s.v. εὐσεβεία.

42 Cf. Burgess 1902, 124 (on the πράξεις): “They are not presented in full or chronological order. Selection is made, and they are grouped to illustrate the Socratic virtues: ἀνδρεία, δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη, φρόνησις. φιλανθρωπία is often added as separate or a more comprehensive virtue”.

43 See p. 393 for the date (and occasion) of *Id.* 17.

The couple Philadelphus and Arsinoë obviously parallels the couple Ptolemy Soter and Berenice, as earlier in the poem Berenice's love for Soter was described in a way that resembles the love of Arsinoë for Philadelphus:

ἧ μὰν ἀντεφιλεῖτο πολὺ πλέον. ὧδέ κε παῖσι
θαρήσας σφετέροισιν ἐπιπρέποι οἶκον ἅπαντα,
ὅππότε κεν φιλέων βαίνῃ λέχος ἐς φιλεούσης·
ἀστόργου δὲ γυναικὸς ἐπ' ἄλλοτρίῳ νόος αἰεὶ,
ῥήιδιοι δὲ γοναί, τέκνα δ' οὐ ποτεοικότα πατρί. Theocr. *Id.* 17.40-4

Indeed he (i.e. Soter) was much more loved in return. This is how one might with confidence entrust the whole house to one's children, when going with love to the bed of a loving wife; the mind of a woman without affection is, however, always elsewhere, and for her giving birth is a light matter, and the children do not resemble the father. (tr. Hunter 2003)

The idea expressed here that the love of woman for her husband produces children that resemble their father – which recalls the situation in the ideal city, as described by Hesiod⁴⁴ – again legitimizes Philadelphus as ruler of Egypt. This legitimation, which is constantly thematized in *Idyll* 17, was of vital importance for Philadelphus, as it was far from evident that he would be Soter's legitimate heir. Of the six children from Soter's previous marriage to Eurydice (the daughter of Antipatros) Ptolemy Keraunos, for instance (who had been married to his half sister Arsinoë II before), was a fearsome competitor. Philadelphus' propaganda thus aimed to create a Ptolemaic dynasty with the legitimate and divine couple of the Theoi Soteres producing the legitimate successor. When Philadelphus then deified himself and his sister-wife as the Θεοὶ Ἀδελφοί ("brother-sister-gods"), the resemblance to the Theoi Soteres suggested both that Philadelphus was the legitimate successor and that the Theoi Adelphoi would in their turn produce the next Ptolemaic king in line (Ptolemy III Euergetes). This policy, of which the coin depicted on plate 2 (in the appendix) is a clear product,⁴⁵ is reflected in *Idyll* 17: through the love of Berenice and Arsinoë for their respective husbands, the two couples are compared to one another in a way that resembles the coin. Moreover, like the couple Soter and Berenice, Philadelphus and Arsinoë are also associated with divinity in *Idyll* 17, as their marriage is compared to the ἱερὸς γάμος, the "holy marriage" of Zeus and Hera (also brother and sister, of course).⁴⁶ Theocritus clearly refers to the deification of the couple as Theoi

44 Cf. Hes. *WD* 235: τίκτουσιν δὲ γυναῖκες ἑοικότα τέκνα γονεῦσιν. "And their wives give birth to children who resemble their parents." (Translation by Most 2006.).

45 See e.g. Svoronos 1904-8, I, 90 (nrs. 604-5); Kyrieleis 1975, 17-8; Hazzard 2000, 89-90 for this type of coin (and similar types).

46 The love of Berenice and Arsinoë II for their husbands and the divine status of the couples recall the love of Isis for her brother Osiris. Their son Horus, of which every (new) pharaoh is the incarnation, is the legitimate successor to the previous king of Egypt (who is identified with Osiris). Cf. Hölbl 2001, 112: "It was the court's propagandist aim that the marriage remind the

Adelphoi, when he compares the couple with the Theoi Soteres and associates them with divinity.⁴⁷ As this cult can be dated to 272/1 BC,⁴⁸ and as Arsinoë II, who died in July 270 BC,⁴⁹ is obviously still alive when the poem was written, the poem can be securely dated to 271/0 BC. The performance features of the poem and its focus on Soter and the legitimacy of Philadelphus as his successor, suggest that the encomium has been performed in Alexandria at the Πτολεμαίεια of 271/0 BC. This quadrennial, dynastic festival was established by Philadelphus in 282 BC to commemorate his father and featured sacrifices as well as gymnastic, musical and equestrian contests in honour of Soter.⁵⁰

The poem ends with an epilogue of three lines (135-7):

χαῖρε, ἄναξ Πτολεμαῖε· σέθεν δ' ἐγὼ ἴσα καὶ ἄλλων
μνάσομαι ἡμιθέων, δοκέω δ' ἔπος οὐκ ἀπόβλητον
φθέγγομαι ἐσσομένοις· ἀρετὴν γε μὲν ἐκ Διὸς αἰτεῖ.

Theocr. *Id.* 17.135-7

Farewell, Lord Ptolemy! You, no less than the other demigods, will I remember, and what I say shall not, I believe, be rejected by those who come after. For virtue make your request from Zeus. (tr. Hunter 2003)

Several formulae from the *Homeric Hymns* are combined here.⁵¹ The farewell formula χαῖρε (ἄναξ), for instance, is very common in the hymns and its presence

Greeks of Zeus and Hera; from an Egyptian point of view this was a clear reference to Isis and Osiris and to the exemplary bond of love and matrimony between the two. It is worth noting, however, that although sibling-marriages did occur at the ancient Egyptian court, there is no evidence from that time of a royal marriage between full brother and sister. The marriage between Ptolemy II and Arsinoë II, therefore, represented for the Egyptians a purer imitation of Isis and Osiris than that of their predecessors at the ancient Egyptian court." See also Stephens 2003, 155-6 on how Philadelphus is legitimized as ruler through his parents in *Id.* 17.

47 Some recent scholars, however, for no apparent reason have neglected Theocritus' clear allusions to the cult of the Theoi Adelphoi. See e.g. Weber 1993, 213, n. 2 and Hunter 2003, 3: "[In *Id.* 17] nothing is said of the cult of the Theoi Adelphoi."

48 On the basis of papyrus *P.Hib.* 2.199, which mentions the "priest of Alexander and the *Theoi Adelphoi*" for the fourteenth Macedonian year (272/1 BC). See also Koenen 1993, 51, n. 61.

49 For evidence see Hölbl 2001, 40 with n. 29 (p. 69).

50 This date and occasion were already proposed by Wilcken 1920, 390, n. 1 and 1938, 311-2. Cf. also Hölbl 2001, 40 on *Id.* 17: "... probably presented at the Ptolemaia of 271/0 and for which he [i.e. Theocritus] probably won the musical contest." For this festival see e.g. Fraser 1972, 231-2.

51 For which see Meincke 1965, 140-4 and Hunter 2003, 195ff. (ad loc.). Compare for instance the following formulae from the *Homeric Hymns* with the epilogue: αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ καὶ σείο καὶ ἄλλης μνήσομ' αἰοιδῆς. "And I will take heed both for you and for other singing." (*H. Hom.* 2.495, 3.546, 4.580, 6.21, 10.6, 19.49, 28.18, 30.19); σεῦ δ' ἐγὼ ἀρξάμενος μεταβήσομαι ἄλλον ἐς ὕμνον. "After beginning from you, I will pass over to another song." (end of *H. Hom.* 5, 9 en 18); δίδου δ' ἀρετὴν τε καὶ ὄλβον. "Grant me status and fortune." (end of *H. Hom.* 15 and 20, and Call. *H. Zeus* [see also n. 39]);. (Translations by West 2003.).

here implies that Ptolemy is a god. In the next lines, however, Ptolemy is associated with the ἡμιθεοί (“demigods”), just as in the beginning of the poem.⁵²

The unusual character of the poem, more specifically the mixing of the genres rhetorical prose encomium and the *Homeric hymn* in *Idyll* 17, should to my opinion be seen in the light of the ideological status of its addressee, as Philadelphus is a mortal god, a human with divine powers, in the eyes of both his Egyptian subjects (according to Egyptian pharaonic ideology) and the Greco-Macedonian population of for instance Alexandria (according to the Hellenistic ideology of the charismatic *basileus*).⁵³ In what remains, I will try to show that Theocritus’ *Kreuzung der Gattungen*⁵⁴ reveals the agenda of the poem to be to merge the Greek and Egyptian conceptions of kingship, in accordance with Philadelphus’ policy to explain and legitimize to his Greek speaking subjects the Egyptian dimension of his kingship.⁵⁵ In order to demonstrate this, I will argue that Theocritus has consistently “translated” Philadelphus’ Egyptian status into Greek by associating the king with both Zeus and the demigods.

Zeus and Philadelphus

As I have shown above, Philadelphus is constantly associated with Zeus in *Idyll* 17. Right at the start the encomium of Philadelphus seems to be a hymn to Zeus. When a few lines later the king appears to be the subject of the poem after all, the suggestion is clearly that Philadelphus is a Zeus on earth. This is reinforced by the description of the king as “the greatest of men”, which parallels the denotation of Zeus as “best of the immortal ones”. Furthermore, Theocritus’ exhortation “let Ptolemy be named in the first place, at the end, and in the middle” (lines 3-4) takes up the opening of the poem: “From Zeus let us begin and, Muses, cease with Zeus”, and thus associates with Philadelphus the common idea that poems should begin and end with Zeus.⁵⁶ At the end of the poem, Philadelphus is even more clearly

52 The ἐπίλογος (“epilogue”) of the rhetorical prose encomium “is often a brief summing up of the results of the life under discussion and an appeal to others to imitate his virtues” (Burgess 1902, 126). This is not the case in *Idyll* 17, but the end of the epilogue of *Euagoras* may provide a parallel. Isocrates there makes a self-conscious claim comparable to that of Theocritus in lines 136-7 (*Euag.* 73): οὐ μὲν ἄλλα καὶ νῦν, ὅσον κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν δύναμιν, οὐκ ἀνεγκωμίαςτός ἐστιν. “Nevertheless, even at my age, to the best of my ability he has not been left without his encomium.” (Translation by Van Hook 1945.).

53 See e.g. Chaniotis 2003 for this paradoxical “mortal divinity” of Hellenistic kings.

54 This term, which has almost become proverbial in classical scholarship, is the title of chapter 9 of Kroll 1924. See Barchiesi 2001 for a contextualization of Kroll’s concept.

55 Cf. Hölbl 2001, 98-112, and the conclusion on p. 112: “This overview of the religious policy of the Ptolemies [i.e. Soter, Philadelphus and Euergetes] shows us that they at once followed ancient Egyptian and Greco-Hellenistic traditions and attempted to synthesize the two.” For the audience of Alexandrian poetry see e.g. Cameron 1995, 56ff., who shows that this “learned” poetry is not reserved for a very small, highly cultivated elite in Alexandria and other Greek cities, as has often been assumed, but also enjoyed reception in more modest circles.

56 See Gow 1950, II, 327 (on *Id.* 17.1f.) for examples, also of the idea applied to humans. This

identified as a Zeus on earth, as in lines 131-4 his marriage to Arsinoe is compared to that of Zeus and Hera.⁵⁷ A contemporary Greco-Macedonian reader of these lines must in this context have been reminded of the ancient and common idea, for instance mentioned by Herodotus in his treatment of Egypt,⁵⁸ that Zeus is the equivalent of the sun god Amun-Re.⁵⁹ The central position of the Egyptian king in the world was based on the close relationship between the king and the sun god. There was a mythical identity between the two and the same power was believed to be at work both on earth and in heaven. The king could not be the sun himself, though, and the Egyptians concluded that the king had taken over the role of Amun-Re on earth. Of course, no person had similar power. As sun god, the pharaoh had the duty to ensure the movement of the sun across the sky by cultic acts, and thus the existence of the cosmos. When the king died, he became one with the sun god in heaven and was succeeded by his ideological (not necessarily his biological) son. Therefore, the (new) king was also regarded as “son of Re”. The conception of the pharaoh as “Amun-Re on earth” is “translated” in Greek in the beginning and end of the poem, where Philadelphus is described as a Zeus on earth. These passages may be compared with a phrase from the Greek text of the famous trilingual Rossetta stone, where Ptolemy V Epiphanes is described as εἰκόνας ζώσης τοῦ Διός, “living image of Zeus”.⁶⁰

The beginning of the γένος-section also expresses this Egyptian idea, now applied to the previous pharaoh, Soter:

application is irrelevant in this context, however, where Philadelphus is (also by other means) associated with Zeus. That Philadelphus should also be named “in the middle” also suggests Philadelphus’ divinity, through the allusion to Theogn. 1.104, where Apollo is addressed, the god with whom Philadelphus is identified elsewhere in the poem (see p. 402-403 with n. 89): ὦ ἄνα, Λητοῦς υἱέ, Διὸς τέκος, οὔποτε σείο λήσομαι ἀρχόμενος οὐδ’ ἀποπαυόμενος, | ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον ἐν τε μέσοισιν | ἀείσω. “Lord, son of Leto, child of Zeus, I never will forget thee at my outset or my close. No, I will sing thee first and last and in between, always.” (Translation by West 1993.) See Cholmeley 1930 321 (on *Id.* 17.137), who notes that Theocritus’ words can be taken quite literally, as Zeus is named in the first and last line, whereas Philadelphus is the subject of the entire poem. Cf. Hunter 2003, 100 (on *Id.* 17.3-4): “Ptolemy is in fact names in the third and third-to-last verses, and the story of his birth occupies the central section of the poem.”

⁵⁷ See also p. 392 with n. 46.

⁵⁸ Hdt. *Hist.* 2.42: Ἄμουν γὰρ Αἰγύπτιοι καλέουσι τὸν Δία. “For the Egyptians call Zeus Amun.” For Herodotus and Egypt, see Lloyd 1975. On the way Greek, nearly contemporary prose writers of the Alexandrian poets (Hecataeus, Euhemerus, Dionysus Scytobrachion), “conceptualized Egypt” see Stephens 2003, 20-73.

⁵⁹ The Theban god Amun was assimilated with Re, the main god of the Egyptians, during the New Kingdom. My information concerning Egyptian kingship is derived primarily from Frankfort 1948 and Gundlach 1998. I endorse the caveat of Hunter 2003, 52, n. 128: “It is (...) worth stressing here that Egyptian religious ideas and kingship ideology changed over time; I am aware that the citation of Egyptian material in the commentary may suggest a far more ‘monolithic’ ideology over centuries than was really the case, but for the purposes of this book this procedure can perhaps be justified.” I hope that my approach is also justified.

⁶⁰ See e.g. the edition of Spiegelberg 1924, 77. Cf. Hunter 2003, 95.

ἐκ πατέρων οἶος μὲν ἔην τελέσαι μέγα ἔργον
 Λαγίδας Πτολεμαῖος, ὅτε φρεσὶν ἐγκατάθοιτο
 βουλάν, ἂν οὐκ ἄλλος ἀνὴρ οἶός τε νοῆσαι Theocr. *Id.* 17.13-5

From his ancestors what a man for bringing to completion a mighty deed was Ptolemy, son of Lagos, whenever he laid down in his heart a plan, the like of which no other man could have conceived. (tr. Hunter 2003)

This passage alludes to two lines in Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus* which deal with Philadelphus:⁶¹

ἐσπέριος κείνος γε τελεῖ τὰ κεν ἦρι νοήσῃ.
 ἐσπέριος τὰ μέγιστα, τὰ μείονα δ', εἴτε νοήσῃ. Call. *H. Zeus* 87-8

By evening he completes what he conceived at dawn (his greatest plans by evening, his smaller ones at once. (tr. Nisetich 2001)

The immediate context of this passage makes Philadelphus a Zeus (or Amun-Re) on earth. In the preceding line 86, for instance, Philadelphus is denoted with the participial substantive μεδέων ("the ruling one"),⁶² which in Homer is used only of Zeus. In Greek literature, swiftness of action is primarily restricted to gods, and it is also ascribed to Zeus.⁶³ At the same time, the "peculiar commendation of (...) Philadelphus"⁶⁴ in lines 87-8 is also very pharaonic. Already in 1925 Wassermann provided an Egyptian parallel from a eulogy for pharaoh Ramses II, which gains force when one realizes that Callimachus' formulation of the action in terms of morning and night is not attested in Greek literature:⁶⁵

"You [i.e. Ramses II] are like Re in all things which you have done; whatever your heart wishes, happens. If you conceive a plan in the night, in the morning it is already brought to accomplishment." (tr. Hunter 2003, 109)

Philadelphus is depicted by Callimachus as Zeus and pharaoh, which actually amounts to the same, as the Egyptian king is regarded Amun-Re (= Zeus) on earth. Like Theocritus, Callimachus also translates Egyptian ideology in Greek. Through Theocritus' allusion to Callimachus, Soter is in *Idyll* 17 identified as pharaoh and

61 Gow 1950, II, 328 (on *Id.* 17.14). See also Hunter 2003, 109 (on *Id.* 17.13).

62 See p. 391 with n. 39 for the text and translation of the passage, in which Philadelphus is also directly associated with Zeus, as in *Id.* 17 (which alludes to it).

63 See e.g. McLennan 1977, 122 (on *H. Zeus* 86), who provides as a parallel Aesch. *Suppl.* 598f.: πάρεστι δ' ἔργον ὡς ἔπος | σπεῦσαι τι τῶν βούλιος φέρει φρήν. "He speaks and it is done; he hastens to execute whatsoever his counseling mind conceives." (Translation adapted from Weir Smyth 1973.).

64 Gow 1950, II, 328 (on *Id.* 17.14).

65 See Hunter 2003, 109 for more parallels. The text: Assmann 1975, no. 237.2-4 = Davies 1997, 237.

Zeus / Amun-Re on earth, and the implication is, of course, that the same goes for his son, who is constantly likened to Soter in this poem.⁶⁶

The characterization of the pharaoh as “son of Amun-Re” is also present in *Idyll* 17. All men involved in the symposium at Zeus’ home on the Olympus, as described in the part of the γένος-section dealing with Soter (13-33), were pharaohs. This is even true for Heracles, if we may believe Manetho, the Egyptian priest who, during the reign of Philadelphus, wrote a history of the pharaohs in Greek called *Aegyptiaca* (“Egyptian matters”). Only fragments of the work and of its epitome have come down to us through an indirect tradition.⁶⁷ Manetho’s history was apparently part of Philadelphus’ policy to make Egyptian kingship more understandable to his Greco-Macedonian subjects and to bring the two populations of Egypt closer to one another.⁶⁸ The names of the Egyptian gods who first ruled Egypt, for instance, are usually not listed in the epitome in transliterated form but by their traditional Greek equivalents: Hephaisthos (= Ptah), Helios (= Re), Kronos (= Shu), Osiris, Typhon (= Seth), Oros (Horus = Apollo).⁶⁹ After the gods, the so-called demigods reigned in Egypt in the predynastic period and among these were Heracles⁷⁰ and Zeus, according to the spurious *Book of Sothis*, which, however, seems to be based on Manetho’s epitome of the *Aegyptiaca*.⁷¹

Demigods

ζ' Ὀρος ἡμίθεος, ἔτη κε'.	7. Ōrus, for 25 years.
η' Ἄρης ἡμίθεος, ἔτη κγ'.	8. Arês, for 23 years.
θ' Ἄνουβις ἡμίθεος, ἔτη ιζ'.	9. Anubis, for 17 years.
ι' Ἡρακλῆς ἡμίθεος, ἔτη ιε'.	10. Hêraclês, for 15 years.
ια' Ἀπόλλων ἡμίθεος, ἔτη κε'.	11. Apollô, for 25 years.

⁶⁶ See pp. 388, 392-3 above.

⁶⁷ See Verbrugghe / Wickersham 2001, 115-8 for the complicated transmission of the text.

⁶⁸ Cf. Manetho’s important role (according to Plutarch, *De Iside* 28) in the introduction (under Soter) of the cult of the new god Sarapis, “which was a conflation of Egyptian and Greek ideas intended to be acceptable to both nationalities” (Waddell 1940, xiii).

⁶⁹ See the reconstructed epitome in Verbrugghe / Wickersham 2001, 130-1 (Manetho, fragment F2a).

⁷⁰ Heracles is already associated with Egypt by Herodotus (*Hist.* 43-5), on which see Lloyd 1976, 200ff. (ad loc.).

⁷¹ Waddell 1940, 17 (Manetho, fr. 3) = Verbrugghe / Wickersham 2001, 176-7 (Pseudo-Manetho, fr. F2a). See also Verbrugghe / Wickersham (2001), 102: “[The *Book of Sothis*] seems to show some knowledge of the genuine *History of Egypt* by Manetho, and it may be of some interest or even use, especially in regard to the predynastic dynasties of gods and demigods.”

ιβ' Ἀμμων ἡμίθεος, ἔτη λ'.	12. Ammôn, for 30 years.
ιγ' Τιθοῆς ἡμίθεος, ἔτη κζ'.	13. Tithoês, for 27 years.
ιδ' Σῶσος ἡμίθεος, ἔτη λβ'.	14. Sôsus, for 32 years.
ιε' Ζεὺς ἡμίθεος, ἔτη κ'.	15. Zeus, for 20 years." (tr. Waddell 1940)

So there is a gathering of pharaohs on Mount Olympus. When in line 16 Theocritus says that "father" has made Soter immortal,⁷² we are dealing with a common Greek denotation of Zeus as the father of gods and men. As Hunter has pointed out: "Following so soon after the patronymic *Λαγείδας* [i.e. son of Lagos], 'father' perhaps hints that, like his companions on Olympus, Heracles and Alexander, Soter had two 'fathers', one of whom was Zeus."⁷³ However, in this specific, pharaonic context the typically Greek denotation is at the same time an allusion to the Egyptian idea that every pharaoh is the son of Amun-Re (= Zeus) as well as the (ideological) son of the previous pharaoh, because Alexander, Heracles and Soter all had mortal fathers as well. The *ἐκ πατέρων* ("from his fathers / ancestors", 13), which opens the section on Soter, already is a hint to this Egyptian concept, especially because lines 13-5 express Egyptian ideology on other grounds (see pp. 396-7).⁷⁴

Finally, I will turn to the birth scene. In this passage (and what follows) Philadelphus is again associated with Zeus (see pp. 389 above for the text). Theocritus alludes to and combines two passages from Hesiod's *Theogony* here, as the bold markings and the underlinings show:⁷⁵

ἦ γὰρ καὶ βασιλεύσιν ἄμ' αἰδοίοισιν ὀπηδεῖ.
 ὄντινα τιμήσουσι Διὸς κοῦραι μεγάλοιο
γυνόμενον τε ἴδωσι διοτρεφέων βασιλῶν

Hesiod, *Th.* 80-82

72 τῆνον καὶ μακάρεσσι πατὴρ ὁμότιμον ἔθηκεν | ἀθανάτοισι. (*Id.* 17.16) "Him the father made equal in honor even to the blessed immortals." Cf. *Id.* 17.25: ἀθανάτοι δὲ καλεῦνται ἐοὶ νέποδες γεγαῶτες. "And his [i.e. Heracles'] very own descendants [including Alexander and Soter] are called immortal." (Translations by Hunter 2003.).

73 Hunter 2003, 111 (on *Id.* 17.16).

74 *Id.* 17.23, in the same scene, in which Alexander and Soter the "grandsons of grandsons" of Heracles, also seems to express the Egyptian idea that every pharaoh is the son of the previous one, thus creating a long dynastic sequence; at the same time, incidentally, the line alludes to the *Iliad*. Compare *Id.* 17.22-3 – ἔνθα σὺν ἄλλοισιν θαλίας ἔχει Οὐρανίδησι, χαίρων ὑίωνων περιώσιον ὑίωνοισιν. "There he [i.e. Heracles] joins in feasting with the heavenly ones and rejoices exceedingly in the grandsons of his grandsons." (Translation by Hunter 2003.) – with *Il.* 2.665-6: οἱ ἄλλοι | υἱέες ὑίωνοι τεβίης Ἡρακλείης. "The other sons and grandsons of mighty Heracles."

75 See e.g. Hunter 2003, 152-3 (on *Id.* 17.73-6).

For she [sc. Calliope] attends upon venerated kings too. Whomever among Zeus-nourished kings the daughters of great Zeus honor and behold when he is born ... (tr. Most 2006)

ἐκ γάρ τοι Μουσέων καὶ ἐκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
ἄνδρες ἀοιδοὶ ἔασιν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κιθαρισταί,
ἐκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες. Hesiod, *Th.* 94-6

For it is from the Muses and far-shooting Apollo that men are poets upon the earth and lyre players, but it is from Zeus that they are kings. (tr. Most 2006)

Moreover, Theocritus here also alludes to the Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*, in which Hesiod is quoted literally:⁷⁶

“ἐκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες”, ἐπεὶ Διὸς οὐδὲν ἀνάκτων
θειότερον. Call. *H. Zeus* 78-9

“But kings are from Zeus”, for nothing is more divine than Zeus' lords. (tr. Nisetich 2001)

As Callimachus calls Zeus' kings divine, the implication of Theocritus' allusion is that Philadelphus is divine as well. The allusions to Hesiod show that the ideas expressed are thoroughly Greek. Yet when one considers the relationship between Amun-Re and the pharaoh (as, for instance, expressed in an eulogy of the Egyptian king Ahmose [16th cent. BC]: “A king is he, made ruler by Re, made great by Amun”⁷⁷), and when one also considers the specific context (a poem in which the relationship between Zeus / Amun-Re and Philadelphus is constantly thematized), the ideas are actually Egyptian, but translated into traditional Greek.⁷⁸ Furthermore, precisely by Theocritus' allusion to Hesiod's *Theogony* 94-6, the Egyptian idea that the pharaoh is the son of Re is evoked once again. Hesiod's ambiguous words ἐκ Διὸς βασιλῆες (“kings are from Zeus”) denote the special relationship between kings and Zeus, but also suggest lineal descent.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ See also p. 391 with nn. 38 and 39 above for the contact between *Id.* 17 and Call. *H. Zeus*.

⁷⁷ Urk. IV 17.16-7 (= Assmann 1975, nr. 232.58): *nswt pw shk3.n R^c s3.n Imn*. I thank J. Dieleman for the translation.

⁷⁸ See Stephens 2003, 158-9 for an Egyptian interpretation of the eagle of Zeus (described in *Id.* 17. 71-3) as the Horus falcon – like the Greek eagle a symbol of royal power.

⁷⁹ Cf. West 1966, 187 (on *Th.* 94): “ἐκ Μουσέων ἔασιν may well be meant literally, of lineal descent. (...) Singers did, at least sometimes, trace their descent from famous singers of the past (...). Royal families similarly traced their ancestry back to Zeus.”

Philadelphus the (demi)god

There is another way in which Philadelphus' Egyptian ideological status is translated into Greek in *Idyll* 17. We have seen that at the beginning and the end of the poem, Philadelphus is associated with the race of "heroes" (ἥρωες), also known as ἡμίθεοι ("demigods") in Hesiod's *Works and Days*:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖα κάλυψεν,
 αὖτις ἔτ' ἄλλο τέταρτον ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ
 Ζεὺς Κρονίδης ποίησε, δικαιότερον καὶ ἄρειον,
 ἀνδρῶν **ἡρώων θεῶν γένος, οἳ καλέονται**
ἡμίθεοι, *προτέρῃ γενεῇ* κατ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν. 160
 καὶ τοὺς μὲν πόλεμός τε κακὸς καὶ φύλοπις αἰνὴ
 τοὺς μὲν ὑφ' ἑπταπύλῳ Θήβῃ, Καδμηίδι γαίῃ,
 ὤλεσε μαρναμένους μῆλων ἔνεκ' Οἰδιπόδαο,
 τοὺς δὲ καὶ ἐν νῆεσσιν ὑπὲρ μέγα λαῖτμα θαλάσσης
 ἐς Τροίην ἀγαγὼν Ἑλένης ἔνεκ' ἠυκόμοιο. Hesiod, *WD* 156-65

When the earth covered up this [sc. the bronze] race too, Zeus, Cronus' son, made another one in turn upon the bounteous earth, a fourth one, more just and superior, the godly race of men-heroes, who are called demigods, the generation before our own upon the boundless earth. Evil war and dread battle destroyed these, some under seven-gated Thebes in the land of Cadmus while they fought for the sake of Oedipus' sheep, others brought in boats over the great gulf of the sea to Troy for the sake of fair-haired Helen. (tr. Most 2006)

Gow comments on line 5 of *Idyll* 17 that only there are heroes said to be descendants of ἡμίθεοι.⁸⁰ Theocritus, however, does not distinguish between heroes and demigods. Lines 5-8 make clear that Philadelphus is regarded as a ἥρωας, as Theocritus implies that he sets out to sing of him as one: "The heroes, who in former times were descended from demigods, performed marvellous deeds and found skilled poets to honor them. I, however, who understand the art of praise, would hymn Ptolemy." (See p. 387 for the text). On the other hand, in lines 135-6, the poet declares that he will sing of Philadelphus as a ἡμίθεος: "You, no less than the other demigods, will I remember (...)." (See p. 393 for the text). As in Hesiod, the terms are synonymous and Philadelphus is both a hero and a demigod. According to Hesiod, this race is divine, **θεῶν γένος** (marked in bold), and as West in his commentary on the *Works and Days* states, "the word [i.e. ἡμίθεοι] refers to their parentage (cf. ἡμίονος, and our 'half-brother'), not to semi-divine status."⁸¹ Theocritus conveys the same idea and connects it, moreover, with Philadelphus in line 8, where he says that he will hymn Philadelphus, for "hymns are the rewards even of the immortals themselves".

80 Gow 1950, II, 328.

81 West 1978, 191 (on *Th.* 160).

So Philadelphus is implicitly called a (full) god. Furthermore, according to Hesiod (marked in italics), this race of demigods lived on earth before our own, iron race, and it included among others the heroes who fought at Troy. Consequently, Philadelphus is constantly associated with famous Homeric heroes in *Idyll* 17. A very explicit example can be found in lines 53-57 (quoted on p. 388 above), where Philadelphus is likened to Diomedes and Achilles.⁸² By analogy with the fathers of these heroes, however, who also belong to this race, Soter is also a hero / demigod and thus divine (the latter was already made clear in the preceding γένος-section of the poem). This brings me back to the beginning of the poem. With his remark in line 5 that heroes descend from demigods (other heroes), Theocritus emphasizes the descent of the demigod Philadelphus from the demigod Soter and eventually from Heracles,⁸³ who is a real ἡμίθεος, according to Hesiod's definition, and from whom the Ptolemies and the previous pharaoh, Alexander, claimed descent, as Theocritus explicitly states in line 27: ἀμφότεροι δ' ἀριθμεῖνται ἐς ἔσχατον Ἡρακλῆα.

"And both [i.e. Alexander and Soter] trace their family back in the end to Heracles." A kind of ἡμίθεοι-dynasty is created, as Philadelphus, Soter, Alexander and even Heracles (if we may believe Manetho), were all pharaohs of Egypt. Moreover, Manetho calls the kings of the predynastic "dynasty" of which Heracles was part ἡμίθεοι (see p. 397-8 above). The state of Manetho's work as we have it prevents us from drawing any firm conclusions, but when we consider the important role of Heracles for Philadelphus' ideological status and realize that both *Idyll* 17 and Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* reflect the same policy to bring Greeks and Egyptians closer to one another, the connection of the word ἡμίθεος with Heracles in a pharaonic context in

82 On an implicit level, the family Soter / Berenice I / Philadelphus is constantly associated with the heroic family Odysseus / Penelope / Telemachus (see Gow 1950, II, on *Id.* 17.13, 34, 64). Through allusions to the *Odyssey*, Philadelphus is likened to the only son and legitimate successor to Odysseus as king, Telemachus. The implication is of course that Philadelphus is the only (legitimate) son of Soter, and thus his rightful successor (see also pp. 392-3 on the importance of this theme in *Id.* 17). The Odysseus-paradigm is a Greek translation of the Egyptian family Osiris / Isis / Horus (which was already a paradigm for the Ptolemaic family: see n. 46): as in the Egyptian family, the only child and legitimate successor has a mother whose love for her husband is proverbial. Cf. the following interesting parallel from a 4th cent. AD papyrus, in which the Greek and the Egyptian couple are also compared to each other: φιλίτω με ἡ δεῖνα εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα αὐτῆς χρόνον, ὡς ἐφίλησεν ἡ Ἰσις | τὸν Ὀσίριν, καὶ μινάτω μοι ἀγνή, ὡς ἡ Πηνελόπη [sic] τῷ Ὀδυσσεύ. (*PGM* 36.289-90) "May the skilful woman love me till the end of time, like Isis loved Osiris, and may she stay chaste for me, like Penelope for Odysseus." I thank J. Dieleman for the reference. Cf. Hunter 2003, on *Id.* 17.13, 34-5, 62-4, 117, who constructs an entirely different Odysseus-paradigm (Odysseus / Telemachus / Athena [as Mentor] = Soter / Philadelphus / Theocritus), in which the family Osiris / Isis / Horus plays no role.

83 Pace Hunter 2003, 102 (on *Id.* 17.5), who has misunderstood Theocritus' formulation: he claims that Theocritus (by means of an allusion to Simonides) refers to the generation of Achilles, "but on this reading T[heocritus] interprets it (allusively but 'wrongly') as 'offspring of hemitheoi'".

both works cannot be a coincidence. This is strengthened by some resemblances between Hesiod's race and the Egyptian dynasty: the latter is also (fully) divine, as it concerns gods as pharaohs, such as Heracles. Furthermore, this dynasty of demigods also lived on earth before the Egyptian dynastic age to which the Ptolemies belong and in which the pharaoh was incarnated into a human, making him "mortal god", a man with divine powers. When one thinks of the heroes who fought at Troy, the demigods were also a very military race, which is again a parallel with the Egyptian pharaoh, whose main duty was a military one: to protect Egypt against foreigners and to conquer foreign territories. It is, I think, not a coincidence that in the explicit comparison of Philadelphus with the warriors Diomedes and Achilles, in lines 53-7, all three men have very warrior-like epithets, such as λαοφόνον ("people-slaying"), ἀκοντιστάν ("spearman") and αἰχμητής twice ("spearman");⁸⁴ these are very "Homeric",⁸⁵ but also allude to the innumerable depictions of the pharaoh killing his enemies with a spear, everywhere in Alexandria and Egypt, of which plate 3 is just a random example.⁸⁶ Although the Greek and Egyptian ἡμίθεοι-paradigms do not quite fit each other, it seems that Theocritus has again tried to explain Philadelphus' pharaonic status of in Greek terms: Philadelphus as pharaoh is as if divine mortals like Achilles or Heracles would in contemporary Egypt be walking among ordinary mortals on the face of the earth. And again, Theocritus is using traditional Greek conceptions and ideas, taken from Hesiod and Homer.

Conclusion

The association of Philadelphus with both Zeus and the demigods are only two ways in which Theocritus tries to describe the king's Egyptian status in Greek terms. Egyptian religion and mythology are not a coherent system, but an amalgam of regional and seemingly inconsistent religious ideas. The pharaoh is considered both Amun-Re on earth and the son of Amun-Re, but by the time of the Ptolemies the pharaoh was also regarded as the incarnation of Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, with whom Berenice and Soter are associated in *Idyll* 17.⁸⁷ Horus is translated by Herodotus into Greek as Apollo,⁸⁸ and with this god Philadelphus is associated in

⁸⁴ See the bold markings in the text on p. 388.

⁸⁵ See Gow 1950, II and Hunter 2003, ad loc.

⁸⁶ Cf. also Hunter 2003, 175, who comments on line 102, where Philadelphus' military prowess is summarized (τοῖος ἀνὴρ πλατέεσσιν ἐνὸς πεδίοισι. "So great a man is settled in the broad fields." See also p. 390 above): "As the verb is standardly used of temples and statues (...), it may evoke the gigantic images of the ruler displayed on Egyptian temples throughout the countryside, like the Theban images of Ramses II ('Osymandyas') described by Hecataeus of Abdera (Diod. Sic. 1.48)."

⁸⁷ See n. 46.

⁸⁸ Hdt. *Hist.* 2.144, 156.

the birth-scene in lines 58 and following.⁸⁹ Although there are many more things to be said about this anything but conventional poem, I hope at least to have shown that in *Idyll* 17 “the Egyptian color”, as Hunter has it, is *not* “painted with the broadest brush”. Rather Theocritus engages in several systematic ways of *interpretatio Graeca* of Egyptian pharaonic ideology. Theocritus did not deviate now and then from traditional Homeric and Hesiodic Greek language to insert an Egyptian idea. On the contrary, Theocritus tried, as much as possible, to merge both paradigms, the Greek and the Egyptian, so that this “thoroughly Greek poem”⁹⁰ is also thoroughly Egyptian.

89 See p. 389 above for the allusions to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and Callimachus’ *Hymn to Apollo*. See also n. 56.

90 Hunter 2003, 53.

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Abbreviations

Edfu X	CHASSINAT, É (1897-1934), <i>Le temple d' Edfou</i> , 14 vols, Cairo.
LSJ	H.G. LIDDELL, R. SCOTT, H. STUART JONES, R. MACKENZIE (eds.) (1968 ⁹), <i>A Greek-English lexicon</i> , Oxford.
Pf.	PFEIFFER, R. (ed.) (1949-51), <i>Callimachus</i> . 2 vols, Oxford.
PGM	PREISENDANZ, K. a.o. (ed.) (1973-4 ²), <i>Papyri Graecae Magicae: die Griechischen Zauberpapyri</i> , 2 vols, Stuttgart.
Sp.	SPENGEL, L. (ed.) (1856), <i>Rhetores Graeci</i> , 3 vols, Leipzig.
Urk. IV	K. SETHE / W. HELCK (eds.) (1906-1958), <i>Urkunden der 18. Dynastie</i> , 7 vols / 22 fascs, Leipzig / Berlin.
WALZ	WALZ, C. (1832-6), <i>Rhetores Graeci</i> , 9 vols, Stuttgart / Tübingen / London / Paris.

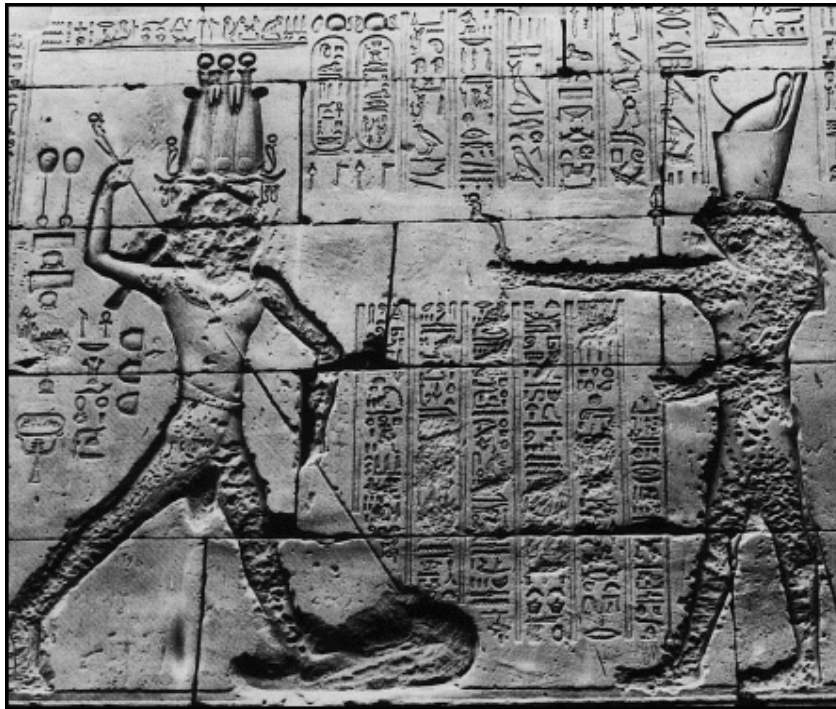
Appendix: plates

1.a (left) Standing statue inscribed for Ptolemy II Philadelphus (c. 260 BC). Rome, Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Egizio 22681 (Stanwick 2002, A3).

1.b (right) Limestone bust of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund (37,37E).



2. Gold tetradrachm. Recto (left): Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Arsinoë II with the text ΑΔΕΛΦΩΝ; verso (right): Ptolemy I Soter and Berenice I with the text ΘΕΩΝ.
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3. The pharaoh (Ptolemy VIII) killing a crocodile with a spear. Exterior of the Ptolemaic temple of Horus at Edfu (237-57 BC), east wall, first register (Edfu X, pl. XCI)
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